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Mexico Denies Five GE Cotton Permits for Commercial Release

Report Categories:

Biotechnology - GE Plants and Animals
Biotechnology and Other New Production Technologies
Cotton and Products

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Report Highlights:

On March 20, 2013, the Government of Mexico (GOM) denied two additional genetically engineered (GE) cotton commercial release requests in the Mexican states of Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon. With this latest round of rejections by the GOM, the total number of denials of GE cotton seed for commercial planting extends to five. In 2012, five requests were also made for commercial planting of GE corn, but those requests are still pending with the GOM.

General Information:

On March 20, 2013, the Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA) published [updated resolutions](#) through the National Service of Health, Food Safety, and Food Quality (SENASICA) on the status of 2012 requests (October requests) for environmental release of genetically modified crops. SENASICA announced that they have denied two GE cotton commercial release requests. This brings the total number of GE cotton commercial releases blocked by the GOM to five. The five commercial planting requests rejected were for the Mexican states of Tamaulipas, Nuevo Leon, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Baja California and Sonora.

Based on Mexico's Biosafety Law, all transgenic seeds must go through three different testing phases: experimental, pilot, and commercial. It is in the best interests of biotechnology developers to complete experimental testing as soon as possible in order to begin the pilot testing and, afterwards, the commercial release. This latest announcement by SENASICA is note worthy because these same types of GE cotton were approved the previous year for pilot release on 190,800 hectares (ha) in the states of Tamaulipas, Sinaloa, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Baja California and Sonora and for commercial release in Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Baja California and Sonora on a total area of 341, 000 ha.

Expectations have been high for approval for commercial permits for GE corn requested in September 2012. At this point, SENASICA, according with the Mexican Biosafety Regulation, is already delayed by more than one month and no approvals for commercial planting of GE corn requested in 2012 have been announced yet. This delay has been used by some anti-GE activist groups and various media outlets to recycle some of the old familiar non-scientific based rhetoric that's been repeated regularly over the course of the last two decades.

The municipalities where permits have been denied for commercial release for GE cotton are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Mexico: GE cotton requests for commercial release in 2012 applications.

Event	Trait	Release Locations	Area requested (Ha)
MON-15985-7 x MON-88913-8	Lepidoptera protection, Glufosate tolerance.	Mier, Miguel Alemán, Camargo, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Reynosa, Río Bravo, Valle Hermoso, Matamoros, Méndez and San Fernando at the state of Tamaulipas and Doctor Coss, General Bravo and China at the state of Nuevo León.	50,000
MON-88913-8	Herbicide glifosate tolerance	Mier, Miguel Alemán, Camargo, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, Reynosa, Río Bravo, Valle Hermoso, Matamoros, Méndez and San Fernando at the state of Tamaulipas and Doctor Coss, General Bravo and China at the state of Nuevo León.	50,000
MON-15985-7 x MON-	Lepidoptera protection, Glufosate	Ascensión, Juárez, Guadalupe, Ahumada, Janos, Guadalupe Praxedis, Buenaventura, Nuevo Casas Grandes, Galeana, Ignacio Zaragoza, Casas Grandes,	200,000

88913-8	tolerance.	Chihuahua, Coyame del Sotol, Namiquipa, Ojinaga, Aldama, Julimes, Camargo, Aquiles Serdan, Rosales, Meoqui, Delicias, Saucillo, La Cruz, Valle de Zaragoza, Allende, Jiménez, López Matamoros and San Francisco de Conchos at the state of Chihuahua; Sierra Mojada, Cuatro Cienegas, Francisco I. Madero, San Pedro, Matamoros, Parras, Viesca and Torreón at the state of Coahuila; Mapimi, Tlahualilo, Gómez Palacio and Lerdo at the state of Durango.	
MON-15985-7 x	Lepidoptera protection,	Mexicali, Baja California	100,000
MON-88913-8	Glufosate tolerance.	San Luis Rio Colorado, Hermosillo, Huatabampo, Novojoa, Alamos, Etchojoa, Benito Juárez, Cajame, Quiriego, Bacum, San Ignacio Rio Muerto, Guaymas, Rosario, Empalme, Onávas, San Javier, La Colorada and Ures at the state of Sonora.	
MON-15985-7 x	Lepidoptera protection,	Reynosa, Rio Bravo, Matamoros, Valle Hermoso, Méndez, San Fernando y Burgos at the state of	50,000
MON-88913-8	Glufosate tolerance.	Tamaulipas.	

Source: SENASICA and the National Information System for Bio-safety and Biotechnology:

<http://www.cibiogem.gob.mx/OGMs/Paginas/Permisos.aspx> and <http://www.senasica.gob.mx/?id=4443>. Information as of March, 2013.

Information from GOM since 1988 to date regarding the requests and permits for environmental release on experimental, pilot and commercial stages of biotech crops is available on the website of the Inter-ministerial Commission for Bio-safety of Genetically Modified Organisms ([CIBIOGEM](#)).

FAS/MEXICO Comments:

Agricultural biotechnology in general and the use of GE corn in particular is a very sensitive issue in Mexico. The debate is now reaching other crops beside corn. SENASICA's recent GE cotton seed rejection, coming on the heels of previous GE cotton seed approvals, shows just how sensitive the biotechnology policy issue is in Mexico. For example, cotton has been planted in Mexico since 1995 and producers have shown a solid preference for GE seeds. However, SENASICA's recent rejection of permits for commercial release of cotton is concerning to many, including cotton producers who say they are not given the opportunity to take advantage of sound science technology. The recent controversy regarding soybeans and honey (see GAIN [MX2041](#)) is another example of the overall sensitivity surrounding the development of biotechnology in Mexico.

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For More Information

FAS/Mexico Web Site: We are available at www.mexico-usda.com or visit the FAS headquarters' home page at www.fas.usda.gov for a complete selection of FAS worldwide agricultural reporting.

Other Relevant Reports Submitted by FAS/Mexico:

Report Number	Subject	Date Submitted
MX2094	Cotton Production Up as Domestic Consumption Drops	12/21/2012
MX2024	Cotton and Products Annual	4/25/2012
MX2041	Honey Producers Fear Advances in Biotechnology	6/26/2012
MX2035	GE Soybeans Approved for Commercial Use	8/6/2012
MX2017	Mexico Approves 4 Additional GE Corn Pilot Tests	3/25/2012
MX2001	GE Corn Pilot Tests Approved	1/6/2012
MX1100	Mapping Corn, Implications for Biotech Development	12/21/2011
MX1086	Biotech Corn Permits Reviewed-November Update	11/18/2011
MX1070	2011 Biotech Corn Permits Being Reviewed	9/20/2011
MX1056	2011 Biotech Annual	7/15/2011
MX1054	June Cotton Update	6/30/2011
MX1102	2010 Biotech Corn Permits Issued	1/26/2011

Useful Mexican Web Sites: Mexico's equivalent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (SAGARPA) can be found at www.sagarpa.gob.mx, and equivalent to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (SALUD) can be found at www.salud.gob.mx. The inter-secretarial commission for biosafety of GMO, that maintain the National Information System www.cibiogem.gob.mx These web sites are mentioned for the readers' convenience but USDA does NOT in any way endorse, guarantee the accuracy of, or necessarily concur with, the information contained on the mentioned sites.